

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claim 4 is cancelled; Claims 20-21 are new.

Support for each new and amended claim is found at the originally filed claims and throughout the originally filed specification. Additionally, support for new Claims 21-22 is found, for example, at previously presented Claim 18.

No new matter is believed to have been added.

The obviousness rejection of Claims 1-7, 9-13, and 16-17 as being unpatentable in view of Plapper combined with Komforth is respectfully traversed because the references, either alone or in combination, do not describe or suggest all of the features of present Claim 1 and the claims depending therefrom.

Present Claim 1 is drawn to a process for producing a semifinished leather product from an animal hide. In the claimed process, an animal hide is pretanned with a chromium-free tanning agent, and a clay mineral that has a bimodal size distribution based on number average particle diameter. The process described in present Claim 1 advantageously produces a pretanned animal hide dried to a water content of from 5 to 45%, based on the total weight of the semifinished leather product.

Applicants submit that Plapper does not describe or suggest process employing a chromium free-tanning agent in combination with a clay mineral having the bimodal size distribution as claimed in present Claim 1, or the advantage accruing from the process of Claim 1, of producing a pretanned animal hide dried to a water content of from 5 to 45%, based on the total weight of the semifinished leather product.

Plapper is drawn to a process of tanning that subjects pickled uncured hides to the action of an aqueous liquor containing (1) chemical tanning or pretanning agents, and (2) auxiliary chemicals including a water-soluble aluminosilicate having an average particle size in the range of 0.1 μm to 5 mm (see the Abstract of Plapper). At column 5, lines 26-27,

Plapper describes an average particle size of from 0.1 to 25 μm , preferably from 1 to 12 μm . The aluminosilicates of Plapper, as shown in the Examples, are characterized by either having an average size or a monomodal size distribution. For example, aluminosilicate A, at column 13, has a monomodal size distribution (e.g., a particle size distribution of 3 to 6 μm) and aluminosilicate B, at column 13, has an average particle size distribution of 5.4 μm .

Plapper, in describing an average particle size or a monomodal size distribution, does not describe or suggest the bimodal size distribution feature of present Claim 1 and the claims depending therefrom and the advantage(s) flowing therefrom. Komforth, whom the Office relies upon for tanning additives, does not remedy the deficiencies of Plapper. Withdrawal of the obviousness rejection is respectfully requested.

The obviousness rejection of Claim 14 as being unpatentable in view of Plapper, Komforth, and Cramer is respectfully traversed. Present Claim 14 depends, indirectly, from present Claim 1. As described above, Plapper and Komforth, either alone or in combination, do not describe or suggest the bimodal size distribution feature of present Claim 1 and the advantage accruing therefrom. Cramer, whom the Office relies upon to add hectorite, does not remedy the deficiencies of Plapper and Komforth. Withdrawal of the obviousness rejection is respectfully requested.

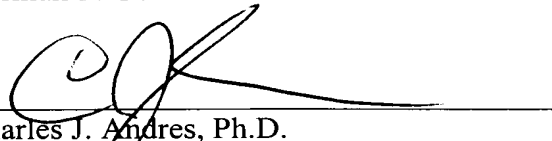
The obviousness rejection of Claims 8 and 15 as being unpatentable in view of Plapper in combination with Komforth and Munjtes is respectfully traversed. Present Claims 8 and 15 depend, directly and indirectly respectively, from present Claim 1. As described above, Plapper and Komforth, either alone or in combination, do not describe or suggest the bimodal size distribution feature of present Claim 1 and the advantage accruing therefrom. Munjtes, whom the Office relies upon to add tentering, does not remedy the deficiencies of Plapper and Komforth. Withdrawal of the obviousness rejection is respectfully requested.

The obviousness rejection of Claims 18 and 19 as being unpatentable in view of Plapper combined with Komoforth and Tamareselvy is respectfully traversed. Present Claims 18 and 19 depend indirectly from present Claim 1. As described above, Plapper and Komforth, either alone or in combination, do not describe or suggest the bimodal size distribution feature of present Claim 1 and the advantage accruing therefrom. Tamareselvy, whom the Office relies upon to add cationic associated polymers, does not remedy the deficiencies of Plapper and Komforth. Withdrawal of the obviousness rejection is respectfully requested.

Applicants submit the present application is now in condition for allowance. Early notification to this effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.
Norman F. Oblon



Charles J. Andres, Ph.D.
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 57,537

Customer Number

22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 08/07)